



William Hojnacki and Richard Bonewitz

Oral History Transcription

November 6, 2007 [Side A]

Interviewed by:	Les Lamon and Derek Webb
Place of interview:	Indiana University South Bend
Date of interview:	November 6, 2007
Approximate length of interview:	49 minutes
Transcribed by:	Zoë Morgan, Student Worker, Civil Rights Heritage Center
Date of transcription:	May 2020
Summary:	<p>Richard Bonewitz was a lawyer appointed to the Human Relations Commission in South Bend. He spoke of his role during the Civil Rights Movement, as well as depositions and investigations he gathered that involved race related cases.</p> <p>William Hojnacki was a social studies teacher and football coach at Central High School for a few years before working on the Human Rights Commission where he filed complaints of discrimination under city ordinances. He spoke of the racism and discrimination he witnessed in schools, and the role he played to combat that.</p>

0:00:00 [Derek Webb] This is an interview for the Oral History project of the Civil Rights Heritage Center at Indiana University South Bend. Today's interview is with Dick Bonewitz and Bill Hojnacki, conducted at Indiana University South Bend, November 6, 2007. The interviewers today are Les Lamon and Derek Webb.

[Les Lamon] Derek's already set the, said who you are. So, I'll just begin folks. Bill and Dick, if you would in either order, just tell us a little bit about your own background and how you come to relate to the topic of race and Civil Rights in South Bend.

0:00:59 [Richard Bonewitz] Well, I got, in the 1960s, appointed to the Human Relations Commission of South Bend by, then Mayor Lloyd Allen. I was not an original member of the Commission. The Commission had been in existence, I think, several years before I became a member. Why I was appointed, I can only guess. I had one friend on the Commission that might have suggested my name to the Mayor. The Mayor, of course, knew me. I was a lawyer and he was a lawyer. I don't know that he had any reason when he appointed me to know my views unless somebody had told what my views were. I certainly made my views clear to my many friends in the community. I had been in the community for, I came here in '56 to practice law.

0:02:21 I— early on, I was in the military and as part of the military, I had temporary duty in Montgomery, Alabama. They sent me to Judge Advocate School, and I had occasion to ride the buses while I was looking for an apartment for my wife, who was in New Mexico teaching school, to come and join me. This would've been in the summer. I would say when Martin Luther King started his thing, I had been riding those buses and I was with him. I made that known to my friends. In fact, I had one or two of them that called me "Martin Luther". So, I suppose that word had spread a little bit and that's the way I got on the Commission. That's just my guess. I don't know if you want more background than that, but...

[LL] You're originally, I believe, from Huntington, right?

[RB] Huntington, Indiana.

[LL] Yeah, and went to IU Law School?

[overlapping conversation]

[RB] Good, old, IU Law School. No black people in Huntington at that time.

[LL] Still aren't, I don't think.

[RB] Well that could be. I just was back there, and I didn't see any black people, and it still may be that way.

[LL] My son lives there, so I don't think I've seen anything.

0:03:46 [RB] Okay. Well of course there's, if you're interested in stories, I could give you a couple stories back there. I can remember, there was an accident in town, this would've been in the '30s, and I was a little kid. It was, blacks were injured, and they would not let them into the hospital. I can remember that my parents and a good many people in that community were absolutely enraged. I think even then the paper may have come out with criticisms of that to them. So that's one of the things I remember. Of course, then in service, I dealt with black people with some regularity, and I wasn't raised with any prejudice, and had no reason to have any prejudice. I would say that my, riding that bus and I had this black lady standing up beside me and I knew I could not stand up and let her sit down in my seat, and I was just appalled.

[LL] Okay. Bill?

0:05:02 [William Hojnacki] Well, I don't know how far back to go. I'm, of course, from South Bend, I was born and raised here. I went to South Bend Central High School. I went to Western Michigan University on a football scholarship, for whatever that was worth. Came back in 1966 to South Bend, got a job teaching and coaching at Central High School, coaching football. At the time, Central High School had a handful of black teachers, one of whom was Bill Gilkey, who was also the head football coach at the time. First black head football coach I think in, probably Indiana, except for the all black schools like (Gary) Roosevelt, Bosse in Evansville, Attucks, and Indianapolis. A good friend of mine, Bruce Smith, was later assistant superintendent in St. Louis, taught right next to me. We had actually gone to high school together and he went off to play football at Northwestern and—

[LL] Was it Northwestern or Marquette?

0:06:07 [WH] He started at Marquette and then Marquette dropped football. Then he transferred to Northwestern when Ara was coaching at Northwestern. The other guy, Tom Connelly, also started at Marquette; he ended up at Iowa State. [inaudible] Anyway, I want to come back to '66, things were bubbling in terms of racial tension in South Bend, something about which I knew a little, but not really much. Like Dick, I came out of a fairly liberal background and it was the kind of things like, if I was a kid and I used the word "nigger", my mouth would get washed out with soap. You know, that sort of thing. So, I had a good deal. I went to high school and grade school with a multicultural group all the time.

0:06:54 Anyway, so another one of the teachers there was a Special Ed teacher by the name of Winston Baz. V-a-z. Who was somewhat interested in Civil Rights stuff in the community I knew about George Neagu and his wife, Marcie. I knew them, not because of any Civil Rights Movement, but because they had a daughter, by the name of Monica, who was a student of ours at Central. She was actually a student of mine, who was in a very difficult position as a student because she was identified with her parents. Her parents were very vocal and very volatile, especially her mother, in terms of the whole Civil Rights thing that we were talking about. She, the kids, she had a difficult time with the white kids, the black kids didn't trust her, and it was really a very sad kind of situation for her. I have no idea what happened after she finally graduated and moved on. But, anyway, that's how I knew the Neagus.

0:08:09 In the meantime, I was there during the '66-'67 school year, and then the '67-'68 school year. Most of the history dealing with that, we had teachers strike. I was on the negotiating committee for teachers at that point in time. Running for the city council at that time, also I was 25 years old, okay. Then at the end of the '68 school year, that's when Neagu got fired and [inaudible], who I never met, left. The Mayor asked, and I don't know to what extent the Commission actually participated in this, process or not, I was not privy to that information. But the Mayor asked Winston Vaz to take over Neagu's position. I remember sitting at home on Lincolnway, my house on Lincolnway, and getting a call from Winston saying would I please take the job as his assistant, or field worker as the official job title was listed. I already had two years in teaching, I liked it, I enjoyed coaching. Although I must say my coaching record said I probably should seek a different calling. I think I was 0-15 and two. Two seasons there as the B team coach and the freshman coach. Anyway, after much discussion with my wife, I decided I would be willing to try this. I had already started my graduate program at Notre Dame, and that summer I was actually taking a couple courses at Saint Mary's College in Urban Studies, interest of mine. A little sidebar, but I didn't think to tell anyone.

0:09:58 So, I went and talked to the Director of Human Resources, he was the Personnel Director for the South Bend schools at the time, this guy by the name of Duke Ferrell. Duke was the former principal of Central. He was the principal when I was there as a student, and I remembered him walking into his office in the old administration building over on St. Joe Street. He put his arm around me and said, "Well, you've only taught for two years, you can't really get a sabbatical or anything". He said, "Bill", pats me on the shoulder and he says, "As long as I'm Director of Personnel here, you'll have a job with the South Bend Schools if you want to take this time off". I said, "If I could take maybe a year or two to do this new job". So, I resigned my position with the South Bend Schools. I

walked into Winston Vaz's office; it was a very small office. It was just him, and me, and the secretary. The secretary was a woman by the name of Odessa Earls, who later went on, was elected to the County Council, as I remember, and started the first Mahalia Jackson fried chicken ticket place on South Bend Avenue and Corby Street there, yeah.

[LL] Her daughter is still here in town.

0:11:06 [WH] Yeah. Very pretty lady. So that's when I went to work for them. I say it's a little side bar story because after one year, in the summer of '69 now, Winston left his position. I'm not sure what caused that, Dick could probably answer that. I don't know whether it was pressure from the Mayor, pressure from the Commission, or simply because, you know, to give you some sense of how you view these jobs differently, but he left. It was clear that I wasn't going to be the next Human Relations Coordinator, the official title is South Bend Human Relations and Fair Employment Practices Commission. It was in recent years they changed it to the Human Rights Commission. The primary job was processing complaints of discrimination under the city ordinance under state law and under the newly passed federal law. I saw my role as primarily building linkages and trying to attack racism in the white community. I ended up dealing with all the area high schools at the time, people don't remember this in today's world. At the time, South Bend was an eight high school system.

[LL] Eight high schools?

0:12:20 [WH] Eight high schools, yeah. Adams, Washington, Central, Clay, LaSalle, Jackson, and North Liberty. So, at the end of that year, of course, I wasn't going to be the assistant or the new director. I think they hired Moon Mullins, the ex-cop, to come in there. He was a big, burly guy and didn't take any crap from anybody, I know that. I remember walking down, he's walking down Chapin Street one night, and some kid was leaning up against the car and he goes up to the kid and says, "Son, de-ass that car". But, anyway, I popped back down to the school corporation and went in to see Duke and I said, "Duke, I want my job back", you know? He said, "God, Bill, I'd love to, but we just don't have any openings. There just aren't any openings". I said, "Duke, you promised me I could have my job back if I wanted it". He said, "Uh... look....". Well, it just turned out that the high school principals had gotten together and they black balled me, none of them would hire me back. Finally, he relented and...

[RB] Is that because you were...?

[WH] Yes, yes.

[overlapping conversation]

0:13:39 [WH] Yes, because I was... What I saw at the time was there was a huge problem in the high schools. I didn't realize it when I was a student; I didn't even realize it when I was teaching, but when I got outside and I saw what was going on... I mean, there was overt racism on the part of the administrations, okay. What happened was the principal at Central was as much of a... I don't know, I don't want to say racist on tape, but certainly he had very little sympathy for the Civil Rights Movement, okay. A guy by the name of McNamara was the principal at Washington and he had the same problem. I knew I was in trouble when I saw in the paper that they had hired some young girl right out of college to teach Social Studies at Central High School, which was my job. I don't know if she could coach football or not.

[LL] What was her record?

0:14:34 [WH] Couldn't have been worse than my mine. But Duke finally did offer me to teach 5th grade at Harrison, which was an all black school at the time, you know, if I wanted it. I said, "No, thanks". That's when I went to Notre Dame and I said, "Chief, what can I do to get into graduate school?" He said, "Well, you're already taking classes, so you just start. You just keep going". So, I was never admitted to the graduate school at Notre Dame. I do have a transcript, however.

[LL] Do you really have a degree?

[overlapping conversation]

0:15:03 [WH] I sort of just walked in there cause I didn't have anything else to do, you know. I didn't have a job and my wife was still teaching at Riley at the time. But, no it was great. What I was trying to do when I was on the Commission, or with the Commission... Winston's view was sort of like a glorified case worker. I mean, what he did, and he just extended what he was doing at Central to the Commission work. If somebody had a problem at the Public Housing Project, you know, he'd solve that problem. Pick up the phone and call somebody, or somebody got thrown in jail, he'd go down and bail 'em out. He got all these individual cases, but he never had the sense that we needed to do something institutionally to deal with the problem of race relations in the city.

0:15:45 As I said, I thought the real problem, the real core of the problem is the schools. So, I went and I met with these high school principals, you know, I'm 26 years old and just a few years out of college. So, I was sort of tentative but I decided: "Shit. What the hell? Let's just do it". I said, "Why don't you guys come up with a Human Rights Commission within the school? Where someone could look at grievances that these kids have...". Cause in the meantime, every other week there was a riot in front of one

school, or another at School Field and football games, you know the black kids... Cause we had to integrate schools, right? Except the black kids when school was over they went this way and the white kids went that way. Then at night, they would come and collide with one another or at school. I see them and I say, "Why don't we do that? Why don't we set up a Human Rights Commission within each high school? Why not create some programs about racism, maybe hire somebody as a full-time faculty?" They had to do this in the end, by the way. Each school hired its' own Human Rights professional. Sort of an ombudsmen person, you know for each of the high schools where they would work out each position. But, anyway, apparently I had pissed off enough principals that they didn't want me to come back, which is... and a great thing cause I ended up here, right?

[LL] It all worked out.

[WH] Otherwise I'd still be losing football.

[LL] Let me ask you something that you mentioned, and I saw Dick sort of raised his eyebrows. Was your perception of the schools the same as Bill's from the Commission standpoint about racism in the schools? Or at least...?

0:17:27

[RB] I don't... I wouldn't argue with him about that. He was there and had a better feel for it, and I don't know that we, on the Commission, really had a feel for it. We didn't get into that problem until after Bill was gone and they had this big open riot or warfare at Washington. Then, the Commission went out, and part of that, actually investigated what had happened there, and actually took a lot of statements from students, and built up a report. How much of that got in the paper? I don't know. I'm sure a lot of it did, because the report was there for the public, and I think all the schools got it. Of course, we got a lot of reactions back from them. But, up until that time, I don't think that I, as a Commission member, had a lot of feeling that, what all these problems were out there.

[LL] Was that...

[RB] I'm sure they were there. [overlapping conversation]

[LL] Usually when you got these things it's problems, or perception of problems anyway. I don't mean to interrupt Derek here, but I want to try to place that Washington episode in time because...

[WH] That was after my time.

[LL] That was after your time?

[RB] After Bill's time. That was during Moon Mullins, after Vaz.

0:19:02 [LL] Okay. Well this episode with Neagu, led to his firing. It also seemed to have stemmed from Washington especially cause you had the students sitting in. I could be wrong, but I got the impression that they were Washington students. I might not be correct about that because they were sending in armed security people into the school that they didn't want. It must have been some feeling of—

[overlapping conversation]

[WH] They're all really hazy to me, Les. I can't... I know I remember responding to an incident, at LaSalle, and I remember responding to an incident. When I say respond, one of the things that, I guess, the police chief expected us to do was to go out and keep the black kids quiet, okay, and stop the issues. I'll tell you this one little quick story. I'm 26 years old, right? I don't have a clue what's going on, I'm trying to figure out how to stay married. I got a call one night and there was a problem at school field. Little black kids— I think there were some Washington gangs, matter of fact, as I remember. In those years, gangs started at 8 o'clock before it was dark. I don't know where Baz was, I don't have a clue.

0:20:31 But, anyway, the police chief calls me and says, "They're gonna have a riot out at school field. You gotta get out there and stop it". I said, "Me?" You know? So, I get in my car and I drive out to the school field and you can see all these kids with their hats in their pockets, you know? A few cops sort of standing, trying to keep them off the football field. Pretty soon there's more kids, so some more cops come. Some more kids come, some more cops come. These cops are not much older than these kids, right? They're just as scared as these kids are about what's going on. They're getting nervous. It was Lauren Buster, I think, that was the assistant to the chief that year, and says, "What the hell are we gonna do?" Just quick off the top of my head, I said, "Send them home". "Huh?" "Send the cops home." "Okay", he said. They obviously didn't just go home, but when the cops left, the kids had nobody to confront, and so they just dispersed, and they left out. I didn't even think about that, I thought about the risk involved, you know. If these kids started ripping up the entire thing, I probably wouldn't have done it that way. But, that was my one moment of glory. I saved a riot that night. [overlapping conversation] Another person, by the way, while you're thinking about it, you might want to talk to and do it fairly quickly because he has cancer, is Al Bias. Al was—

[inaudible]

0:21:55 [WH] He was a teaching at Muessel school at the time, he then went to Jackson. Then as, this was another issue that I, you know, figured out later. One of the things that Don Dake did, and rest his soul... Charlie

Holt, I think, was okay. He was a tough guy, but I think he was fair. Don Dake, I'm not so sure about. But, as these black teachers would rise to prominence, they would get rid of them or deny them promotion, so many of them left. Gilkey left, went to Elkhart, Al Bias left, went to Elkhart, uh, there were a couple others. Andre Muhammad was a really bright, young guy. I don't know where he ended up. There was just no, not only no encouragement for these young teachers to, but there was clear discouragement. So, they would get the worst assignments with the worst kids, and we had tracking systems, like you do now. Advanced placement, and average, below average... These teachers would always... they had the hardest jobs. But Al might give you some insight. I have his phone number; I don't have it with me. I guess maybe I do...

0:23:04 [RB] I tell you one story, but first of all, Holt proceeded to date.

[WH] Right.

[RB] Holt was the superintendent at the time that we had this blow up I'm talking about at Washington.

[WH] Yes.

[RB] It was... no, no. No, no. that was not the same blow up. No, Dake. Dake was superintendent when the Washington thing—

[overlapping conversation]

[WH] Holt was—

0:23:35 [RB] Holt was at an earlier time. Yes. Holt is perhaps one of the reasons that George got kicked out. It had to be one of the reasons. George Neagu, I always liked him, and the time I was on the Commission and he was there, I certainly was a supporter of George. I lacked support of George at the time he was terminated by the Mayor, and that was precipitated by an event where Holt was in the— He came with his entourage to sit down with the Commission to talk about problems. What an opportunity for a beginning of a communication what can be done. George Neagu immediately took over. I sat there and listened as George Neagu absolutely excoriated Holt. I couldn't believe it. I was shocked to the point of being incensed like you can't believe. I just sat there during that and finally the meeting just broke up. I'm sure it was at that point, I'm sure I didn't wait till the next day, and I just blew up. I have never seen anything like that in my life. I never saw such absolute disrespect, discourtesy. I heard this from somebody later, and probably Bill Newman, he and I always got along pretty well. George knew I was a supporter of his, and he told somebody, "I'm sure sorry I lost Dick's support during this".

[LL] And he did.

0:25:55 [RB] And he did over that meeting and for that very thing. I would say again, who remembers time anymore? But I wouldn't be surprised it was within one week to two weeks after that event that George Neagu was no longer there. Winston, I think Winston then discussed with us [inaudible]. I think everybody loved him, Winston [inaudible]. I worked with him and I thought, "Love that man". His leaving, I think that was Winston's choice. I have no, absolutely no reason to believe otherwise. Certainly, the Commission was well satisfied with Winston Vaz. He was a good guy, a delightful person, and I really felt sad when he left. The reason that he gave us was opportunities were opening back in the South and in Florida, and he wanted to go back and take advantage of it. I had no reason to doubt that.

0:27:11 One other event happened to Winston that I heard about. You may know about this. A young black guy, can't remember his name, had apparently a good background and a good student. But, for whatever reason, he robs, knocks down an 80 something year old woman. I remember this story, he robs her. Well Winston got knowledge of this kid, and believed he did it, and he did. Winston told the kid, "The thing to do is turn yourself in and [inaudible]". Well, he was up in front of Judge Dempsey, and Judge Dempsey wasn't going to have any of this knocking down and robbing some old lady. So he, I don't remember what the sentence was, but he gave him a good one. The fact that he was young, you know? Maybe he was a juvenile... Do you know that? Maybe he was...

0:28:39 [WH] He was, and I do. Come to think, it was Jim Wilder. Wilder was his last name, and he had a younger brother, Marion, that played football that broke his leg one day. But Jim Wilder was a good athlete, good kid. I remember going to court with Winston during the sentencing of that thing and...

[overlapping conversation]

[RB] Did that have anything to do with Winston even?

[WH] I don't know whether it did or not.

[RB] I'm sure he felt terrible about that.

0:29:15 [WH] Yeah. Well, I mean he actually ended up doing the right thing, but he had a real close rapport with this Jim Wilder, I know that. And we all did, I mean, he was a good kid. You could distinguish between the ghetto kids who run around and were doing all sorts of terrible things, and the kids that were coming out of sort of middle-class backgrounds who tried to do the right thing. How he got caught up in this incident? I don't remember

any of that. But I do remember the case, and I do remember him. I don't know. It's a blank to me. I mean, I found out one day that he was leaving. That's all I know that, Winston was leaving.

[overlapping conversation]

[WH] I knew when he was gone that I was gone too.

[DW] I just want to stop really quick. I want to make sure the tape [inaudible].

[LL] Alright, sure.

[WH] Wow—

0:30:45 [RB] So we're down there at Leeper Park, and so these kids are out on the island in Leeper Park fishing. We're across from 'em. So, some of them, we see 'em walk across the bridge and go up, and pretty soon the rocks start coming down on us. So, we had a motor on our canoes. So I told my buddy, I said, "Well move down there slowly, just go on down". So they moved down, but they couldn't get around us again. So, my buddy, well he wasn't gonna put up with this. So, he says, "I was just ready to motor on down the river, but I ought to go over to Leeper Park". So, we go over and pull our canoe up on the shore and come around. There's a bridge going out to the island. We were on one side of the bridge, and my partner is out there lecturing a young gentleman. I'm standing there, and I did take a canoe paddle with me, just in case I would need it. I'm just standing there [inaudible]. All of a sudden, here comes a rock that must have been that big around [inaudible].

[LL] Jeez. They were trying to hit you?

0:31:36 [RB] Oh, yeah. So anyway, my partner said, "There's a kid going by. Call the police". So anyway, they call the police, the police come. So anyway, we get home and I suppose we're telling it in the kitchen on South Street. We're having a beer, I guess, telling [inaudible] what happened. Of course, it was the newspaper, and they wanted to check the story out. The police got there and the kids just disappeared. They went some place else and caused a bunch of trouble some place else that night. They picked up a mess of them up some place else that night. But, anyway, next evening, [inaudible] talked to the local section, "Lawyers Stoned on the River". [inaudible] Oh, my lord. [inaudible] Oh, God. We would laugh, I had a sense of humor, so I was laughing too. So that was just fun. That was part of— and I can't remember when that happened in relation to all this other stuff we're talking about. But, anyway...

0:32:56 [LL] You mentioned Judge Dempsey, I don't know whether you have any impressions of him. For some cases, I can remember him coming up here... Cause he's from America.

[WH] I didn't realize that.

[LL] Back in the '40s, Dempsey. He was a tough bird, but I think he was pretty fair. My impression of him was pretty good. The one who caused, in the vicinity who was very volatile, and Dick, you might want to respond to this, was John Montgomery. He had, John, before we had an elected school board— [overlapping conversation]. He had an appointment on the school board, but boy, we talk about [inaudible]. I never knew.

[RB] [inaudible] There's a story on him, on Kopec, who became the judge who took office with him. This better not be on the tape.

[DW] Should I turn this off?

[RB] Yeah, turn that off. Anyway—

[overlapping conversation]

0:34:55 [LL] Wasn't Tom Singer in that group?

[WH] Tom Singer was in that group. Paul Kuzby, who's now in jail, was in that group. What's his name? Geaner. George Geaner was in that group. George Geaner, that is, who's now retired. We had a guy named Michael. They all, these were the guys that were prosecuting these cases as well, okay. In the meantime, we prosecuted and go to work, and we'd come home and go to somebody's house and smoke grass.

[RB] You can go down to the river and get something.

[WH] Yes, yes. Guess where they'd get the grass? You know, the marijuana. They get it from the prosecutor's office because they would arrest these guys and confiscate it and these deputy prosecutors would take it.

[RB] You don't know anything about that, do you?

[WH] Leon Kowalski is also in jail, that's another one. His father was a very prominent attorney. Leon decided not to pay income taxes in California.

0:35:38 [LL] Well I mentioned Dempsey, because I think he was the judge in the lawsuit— Remember a guy in town by the name Bill Morris? Billy Morris?

[WH] Yes. Real estate guy.

[RB] He was the judge in that suit?

[LL] He was the judge in that suit, wasn't he? He was also the judge, I believe, in the... oh, what was the fitness group that the Civil Rights Commission founded discrimination against?

[WH] Oh, yeah.

[LL] It's not Fitness USA. But it was Slender Form. Slender Form. He was the judge of that and in both cases, it went against the Civil Rights thing and I just wondered whether...

[WH] And again, I don't know that. I never knew Ken as a judge. I knew Cameron, but I didn't...

0:36:28 [RB] Well you would not say that Ken Dempsey was what you would call a liberal. He was on the conservative side of things, I would say. He was certainly a straight shooter. He was not a judge that I preferred to have my cases in front of, but I got along with him. But, he would, I would not be surprised that he ruled the way he ruled in those cases.

[LL] Okay.

[RB] But, in sitting there, I'm not sure I would rule that way. Let's put it that way.

[LL] Derek, you got anything you want to add. We're all talking here...

0:37:15 [DW] Mmhmm. One of the things I definitely wanted to ask about, is you had talked about, specifically Mr. Hojnacki, you had talked about the incident at School Field with some of the Washington High School students.

[WH] Well, I think it was Washington. I can't be sure.

[DW] Okay. I'm just curious, as far as context, what year that was in?

[WH] Oh, well it had to be in the fall of '68.

[DW] The fall of '68?

[WH] Cause I was only there one football season. I don't remember the dates or anything.

[DW] There's a lot of... and this is typical to have a lot of say armed guards or police officers?

[overlapping conversation]

0:37:51 [WH] Oh, yeah. They did. Yeah, they did. They usually tried to stay out of real visible things. But you have to understand that a lot of incidents, not huge riots, but where these kids would gather and where they would throw

stones, or they would pick lawyers in a canoe. They knew you were lawyers, that's why they did it. So, they would increase their visibility when that occurred. Now, and I said, Tom Holland was a good guy. The assistant chief was a good guy in the sense that—

[LL] Lauren Buster?

0:38:31 [WH] Lauren Buster, yeah. Who ended up teaching for us, I remember that. So, they wanted to be fair and they wanted it to be even handed, but at the same time, their job was to protect public safety and to the extent that if they had to use force to do that, they would do so. I think there was a lot of, I think the Commission was a big help in that respect that what you can't do is beat kids' heads. This isn't Montgomery. We're not going to do that. So, we'll provide as much visible security as we can and try and discourage kids from doing these things, but we're not going to go too far. They'd beat some kids up from time to time. Usually they'd get released pretty quickly, and I didn't know that was... but this liberal group of prosecutors who were really way to the left of mainstream.

[LL] That was one of the things in this pack of materials that I put together that I found in various places...

[WH] Povlaski, was that lawyers name. Povlaski.

[RB] That's it.

[overlapping conversation]

0:39:40 [LL] There's some things in there from the Unitarian Church, I believe. Which Lynn Snyders, who I think was the wife of the Unitarian minister, was one of these very liberal activist kinds of women in the neighborhood, in the city. She's making the cut, trying to figure out why having armed security guards was inflammatory. As best you recall, these issues with [inaudible], why did they put—who's request was it to put armed security guards in the high school? Cause that seems to be what they were trying to get rid of, the Principal Council was, the Principals.

[DW] And this was a decision that was made sort of after disturbances or riots kind of end. The summer of '67? Or was this...?

[WH] What year was the big one?

[LL] '67.

[WH] That's when they had the major report.

[overlapping conversation]

0:40:41 [WH] So this one's after that? I mean, again, the principals' view was, "Well we're not gonna discriminate against anybody, but we're also not gonna have any incidents on our property". So, to accept it, they felt that you had to have visible force present to discourage these kids from taking the actions of... that they did take. I think to a degree it probably worked. Sure, it was inflammatory in terms of, if they were there to stop the black kids from doing stuff the black kids were doing. The black kids had real grievances, very serious, real grievances. They were discriminated against in the classroom, they were discriminated against in the social activities. All these high schools had these very exclusive clubs.

[RB] Jacket clubs.

[WH] Jacket clubs. Absolutely, you know. They were very racist in that respect, and I think we, at Central, were probably better off than most. I go back and I look at the yearbooks and so forth, and I'm amazed at how few black kids are in those pictures doing whatever it is they're doing. Sports was the only thing we had going for us at the time. That was purely integrated. I remember 1967, when Central won the state basketball championship and Jim Powers was the coach. The first time, he had five black kids on the court.

[LL] '57.

0:41:58 [WH] '57, yeah. Everybody said that Danny Bishop was the fifth kid. He was a white kid. Joe Winston was a better basketball player than he was, but they didn't dare start five black kids, you know.

[RB] They're not worried about that anymore.

[WH] Not anymore.

[LL] Well, there's several avenues that immediately jump out at me. I mean, you said, first thing is you don't know where it came from, with that episode at the football game, was to get the police out, right?

[WH] Yeah.

[LL] [inaudible] says the police was inflammatory, and it worked. That's what seems to me that the Youth Council is basically saying that action that they're talking about here was that they were trying to get them out of there as well. I think I remember you telling me, and I talked to you once before, that when you did those, took those depositions at the later episode—

[RB] Later episode, yes.

[LL] Yeah. That you couldn't find much evidence that there was...

0:42:57 [RB] Well, that was absolutely instigated by the whites. I don't think there was any question of that after the investigation that it was not the blacks that precipitated it. It was a sudden thing that came up. But, these white guys, and we have the name of their leader, he practically sat there and admitted it. What they ever did to him, if they did anything, I have no idea. But, he and some of his buddies, they came all ready, and the black kids. I think at that time, when they went in, there would be a mixture of whites and blacks. I mean, I'm sure. The blacks would be kind of together, but there would be whites there all around. On this particular day, the testimony was, and the school people had absolutely no idea this was coming, but the kids knew it. The blacks were on one side of that auditorium, and the whites were on the other, and that's the way they went in, and that's the way they were fixed through it all. And when that broke up, it started and it was the white kids that precipitated it. The blacks knew it was coming, and that was the reason they took the position they took. They had all the stories, the girls couldn't go in the restroom. It was terrible, just scary. It was all bullshit. How many girls we asked, "Are you afraid to go in the restroom?" White girls, black girls. They just looked, I said, "What are you talking about?"

[overlapping conversation]

0:44:45 [RB] Oh, that was a rumor. That was a rumor out there that you hear all the time. It's all rumor. Now, I'm sure there had been an incident that happened at some time and it just mushrooms. But, of all the testimony we took, we couldn't find any of that going on. Couldn't find anything that caused this except what the white kids precipitated, and made it known that it was coming.

[LL] In the auditorium?

[RB] Yeah.

0:45:18 [WH] One of the things that we did when I was there in the high schools, was we rented a space in the Old [inaudible] building on Michigan and [inaudible], and we set up what was called, "Rumor Control". We would get volunteers to sit there and listen to the police scanners, for the Police Department, so that if somebody thought there was going to be a riot, or a problem, or an incident, they could call at Rumor Control, and we'd be able to say, "No, there's nothing going on". I don't know how well that worked, I don't remember that, but we set that up as a way of dealing with the— Cause rumors were just flying everywhere. "This is gonna happen. That's gonna happen." "A group of kids are gonna meet you down here at Leeper Park". Or Howard Park was the big confrontation place there, because kids they would walk home from school— School field was there to play football, so the kids from the West side would walk down the river

to get downtown and then you catch a bus or walk to the West side. So that's where these kids would... "Ah, there's gonna be 18 kids and they're gonna kill this guy", or something. None of that ever happened, of course, but there was all kinds of crock, and it just scared the hell out of people.

[LL] That kind of context is one of the things that you'd clearly want to try to understand.

[WH] Yeah.

[LL] You can read what makes the newspapers these episodes, but we need this kind of context.

[DW] Absolutely. I'll just sort of go back to also the armed guards and that kind of issue. You said there was eight schools in the system?

[WH] Eight schools.

[DW] Okay, and then throughout the high schools, was that kind of the same response at each high school? Or was it kind of unequal in a way...

0:47:01 [WH] Well, I think that... The way it broke out then, okay. Heaven forbid I should judge the school board back in the 1950s, you know? But they built LaSalle, and you know it was the front of the baby boom generation, okay? That was the highest enrollment that schools around the country had. When I graduated from Western Michigan in 1966, they would publish the list of school, teaching vacancies. They were everywhere in the country. There was a huge teacher shortage. Of course, that's when the strikes came, and they wanted more money cause that's just tradition. So, they built LaSalle to be the new Central, okay? The idea was that they were going to close Central, and in fact, the original idea was that they were going to build LaSalle and move Central there. Take all of the trophies and— Which is what they did with Washington High School. Washington High School was on Sample Street.

[LL] The old Ivy Tech.

0:47:58 [WH] The old Ivy Tech, and then they built a new building out on Western Avenue out there, except they moved all the trophies and called it Washington. Well, they could have done the same thing with LaSalle, but they didn't. So, they called it LaSalle, and in the meantime, they left Central open because they didn't have the capacity. That's why. So. what you had at that time, was you had Central High School that, if it wasn't predominantly black, it was very close to being predominantly black, relatively small enrollment. Very large minority enrollment at Washington, very large minority enrollment at Riley. Adams had a few, but these were the East side black kids. These were the middle-class black kids. From the

Chalfant Heights, and that area along Eddy Street. You had none at Clay. You had none at Jackson cause all the racist kids that lived in the Riley district, they didn't want to go to school with the black kids. Moved out South near Scottsdale and Kensington Park and all that sort of thing. So, Jackson was virtually all white, and North Liberty was virtually all white. So, you had different dynamics at each of the high schools. Where the most tension was, was at Washington, and Riley, and Central.

[LL] Nothing changed.

0:49:04 [WH] At LaSalle. LaSalle was— LaSalle has always been in sort of a transition stage, even up until the time we closed it a couple years ago because that Northwest area is in a transition stage.

While I was over on College Street, we had two black families in our neighborhood. One was Curtis, Dr. Curtis with Dennis.

[RB] Guy Curtis.

[WH] Yes, Guy Curtis, and his son who became a physician. All-State, All-American football player in the first division—

[Audio ends]